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This book is intended for readers aged 18 and up. It may contain themes considered “mature.”

ASHES, ASHES

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PATRIARCH...

I... I'M SORRY.

I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU.

I RECOGNIZE YOU. YOU'RE DENIS, MONT-VENTOUX'S FORGE-MASTER.

YOU BUILT THAT MACHINE?

YES. I WORKED ON IT EVERY NIGHT FOR TEN YEARS.

WHERE DID YOU GET THE IDEA FOR IT? DID YOU READ IT IN SOME BOOK? I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO READ...

THE IDEA CAME TO ME WHILE WATCHING A TEAPOT ON THE FIRE. THE BOILING WATER LIFTED THE LID. I WANTED TO USE THE POWER OF THE BOILING WATER.

SO I FIRST BUILT AN ENGINE THAT WOULD SPIN THE WHEEL OF MY WHEELBARROW WITH A SPAN OF LEATHER. THEN I TRIED SOMETHING BIGGER...

I DID IT, FATHER. I WANTED TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT MY MACHINE, AND OTHERS LIKE IT THAT WE CAN BUILD, CAN SPARE US FROM MUCH OF OUR DAILY SUFFERING...

...

FOOL!

PATRIARCH, I BEG YOU...

SHUT UP!

I WON'T LET YOU WALK YOURSELF AND YOUR BROTHERS DOWN THIS PATH AGAIN!

I'LL DESTROY THAT MACHINE!

AND THE MIND THAT MADE IT!

WH... WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE! I'M INNOCENT!

I JUST WANT TO MAKE OUR WORK EASIER, NOT BRING ANYONE MISFORTUNE...!

THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT...

...IS TO STOP RESISTING AND LET YOURSELF BE KILLED.

YOU'RE CRAZY!

YAAAH!

ON THE CONTRARY, I'M MORE LUCID THAN ANYONE!

FRANCOIS, WHAT...

?!

A NIGHTMARE...

...OR A PREMONITION.

HORSEBACK PATROL IN 2052...

WHO WOULD'VE THUNK IT?

SOME SCIENTISTS WE NEVER BELIEVED, NO DOUBT. THEY PROBABLY WARNED THE AUTHORITIES EVEN AS THEY REFUSED TO LISTEN.

THE ELECTRICITY COMPANIES ARE RICH, POWERFUL, AND GENEROUS WITH POLITICIANS...

IF WHAT THEY'RE SAYING AT THE MINISTRY IS TRUE AND IT WAS A SOLAR FLARE, THEN WE'VE KNOWN ABOUT THEM FOR DOZENS OF YEARS.

YEAH, THEY CAUSED MASSIVE BLACKOUTS IN CANADA BEFORE THIS...

THIS TIME MUST HAVE BEEN MORE POWERFUL THAN EXPECTED, TAKING DOWN THE ENTIRE PLANET'S ELECTRIC FIELD...

DON'T EVEN NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT COMES NEXT.

FSSSSSHHHH

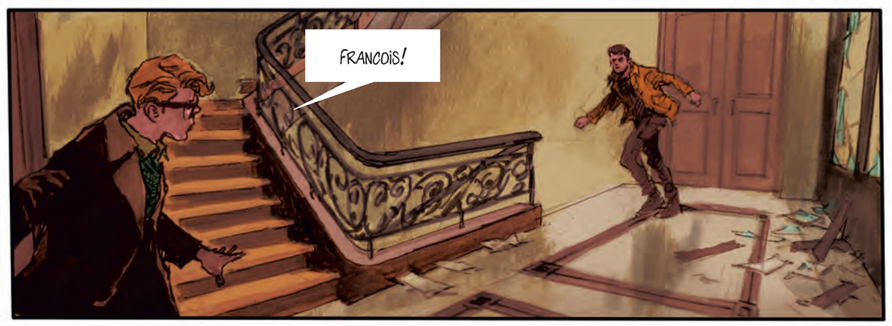
THE JET FUEL!

DONG
DONG
DONG
DONG
DONG

THERE'S A FIRE!

WE'RE CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS ON THE ÎLE DE LA CITÉ!

I'LL BE BACK, BLANCHE.
DON'T MOVE!


FRANÇOIS!

PIERRE, YOU'RE COMING, TOO?
OF COURSE!

THIS WAY! IT'S FASTER!
LEAD THE WAY!

DO YOU HAVE ANY SAVINGS?

NOT MUCH.

IN TWO OR THREE DAYS, MAYBE IN A FEW HOURS, NONE OF IT'LL BE WORTH ANYTHING.

YOU BETTER USE IT WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME, IF THERE'S ANY TIME LEFT.

WE CAN POOL EVERYTHING TOGETHER WHEN WE GET HOME, IF YOU WANT...

...AND THEN YOU CAN WORK ON GETTING SUPPLIES TONIGHT...

...WHATEVER THE COST...

...I'LL TELL YOU WHAT TO GET.

I FOUND ALMOST EVERYTHING WITHOUT EVEN RESORTING TO LOOTING THE MINI-MARKETS, JUST LIKE YOU ASKED.

BECAUSE OF THE WIND, THE FIRE IS EATING AWAY AT PARIS ONE BLOCK OF HOUSES AFTER ANOTHER...

WE HAVE TO LEAVE THE CITY.

WITH WHAT YOU BOUGHT, WE'LL FOLLOW THE SEINE SOUTH. THOSE FILTERS YOU GOT WILL ENSURE WE ALWAYS HAVE WATER TO DRINK.

AND CUTIE WILL COVER OUR MEAT.

THE HORSE? WOULDN'T HE BE MORE USEFUL CARRYING SUPPLIES?

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT AT FIRST, BUT HOW WOULD WE FEED HIM?

IT'S TOO RISKY. WE COULD GET ATTACKED BY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO STEAL HIM FROM US. THERE'S NOTHING MORE VULNERABLE THAN A HORSE.

ONE POCKET KNIFE CAN PUT HIM OUT OF COMMISSION AND LEAVE US ON FOOT. NOT TO MENTION A BEAST LIKE THAT DRINKS A LOT.

I'VE DECIDED TO SACRIFICE HIM.

WE'LL NEED TO FIND SOME BIKES TO REPLACE HIM. THAT'LL BE TOMORROW'S MISSION.

HOW'S YOUR WIFE DOING?

THE HEAT MAKES HER MORNING SICKNESS WORSE. BUT SHE'S HOLDING UP.

GOOD. HEADING OUT IN A GROUP OF JUST FOUR OF US WOULD BE RISKY. I'LL FIND US SOME TRAVEL COMPANIONS.

I'M GOING TO LA ROCHE TO INVITE MY SCULPTOR FRIEND...

...NARCISSE.

THERE'S AN EX-RACER WHO HAS A BICYCLE SHOP IN MONTPARNASSE...

GEORGE PELISSON

AND DOCTOR FAUQUE, OF COURSE.

HIS DAUGHTER, COLETTE.

AND HER BOYFRIEND: BERNARD TESTE.

POOR BEAST.

WHEN RACE HORSES STOP WINNING, THEY GET SENT TO THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE, TOO...

DID EVERYTHING GO THE WAY YOU WANTED, FRANCOIS?

YES, MRS. VELIN. WE'LL LEAVE SOME OF THE DRIED MEAT FOR YOU AS PROMISED.

OH, I DON'T DOUBT YOUR WORD. BUT THAT'S NOT WHY I WAS WAITING OR YOU.

I WANTED TO INTRODUCE MY GREAT-NEPHEW. HE WANTS TO LEAVE PARIS, TOO. I'M TOO OLD FOR IT NOW, BUT I SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT YOUR PLAN...

ANDREW MARTIN, NICE TO MEET YOU. I WAS A LABORER AT THE GREAT WINDMILLS IN PANTIN.

I'VE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD AT JOB INTERVIEWS, BUT...

YOU'VE GOT A FIRM HANDSHAKE, YOU MAKE EYE CONTACT, AND YOU LOOK STRONG. WELCOME ABOARD.

STARTING TOMORROW WE'RE ALL GOING TO LIVE HERE TO PREPARE FOR THE TRIP.

BRING EVERYTHING YOU'RE TAKING AND A MATTRESS.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US, WE'RE GOING TO GO TAKE A SHOWER WHILE THERE'S STILL SOME WATER LEFT IN THE PIPES...

ALRIGHT, INTRODUCTIONS DONE.

BEFORE WE ASSIGN CHORES AND CHOOSE OUR WEAPONS FROM WHAT WE'VE BUILT OR GATHERED, WE HAVE TO DECIDE ON A LEADER...

I'VE ASSUMED THE ROLE SO FAR AND I'M WILLING TO KEEP GOING...

...BUT I'LL SUBMIT TO MAJORITY RULE, OF COURSE.

SO, WHO'S WITH ME?

I KNEW I'D USE THIS SOMEDAY! SMILE!

RHAAAAAAAA!

AAH!

I KNOW THAT GUY!

HE WAS THE BUTCHER IN OLD PARIS, ON DOISNEAU STREET...

THE WORLD'S GONE CRAZY... WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT HE'D BE CAPABLE OF THIS...

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME! TAKE A SEAT SO I CAN GIVE YOU A SHOT.

THERE'S CHOLERA IN PARIS.

ALREADY?

THE ANCESTORIUMS AREN'T CLIMATE-CONTROLLED ANYMORE.

THE CORPSES ARE ROTTING AND SPREADING DISEASE.

WE JUST SAW SOMETHING CRAZY: A RAIDER PILLAGED AN ENTIRE BUILDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF US.

THEY LEFT WITH A TON OF FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES WITHOUT ANYBODY DOING A THING.

NOT THAT WE DID ANYTHING, EITHER, ADMITTEDLY.

KNOW WHERE THEY LIVE?

THEY HAVE PROVISIONS AND THEY MAY HAVE OTHER THINGS WE NEED...

AND I KNEW THEIR LEADER...

NO, BUT I KNOW HIS SHOP. WHY?

...WE SHOULD PAY THEM A VISIT.

WHAT'S THAT NOISE?!

DANGER!

INTRUDERS!

KILL THEM!

IT TAKES A DEAD MAN...

...TO KNOW ONE.

AHH!

AHRR!

NARCISSE, DID YOU FIND THE BUTCHER?

I... I THINK SO.

I'M GOING TO DE-BONE YOU...

JUST TRY IT!

HNG!

YOU'RE CRAWLING LIKE AN ANIMAL ABOUT TO DIE...

SURPRISE!

I'VE MET PLENTY OF GUYS LIKE YOU...

GUYS WHO THINK THEY'RE BETTER JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE A LITTLE SMARTER THAN EVERYONE...

HFTT...

BUT, IN THE END, YOU'RE ALL WEAK. Y'KNOW WHY?

BECAUSE YOU NEVER LEARNED TO SUFFER!

THAT'S WHY I WIN EVERY TIME!

RRR... PRE... PRESUMPTUOUS!

AAAAARGLLLL!

HNTTTT....

FRANCOIS!

IT'S OVER!

THAT'S THE ONLY RIGHT THING YOU'VE SAID...

THERE ARE THREE SURVIVORS.

IN DIFFERENT STATES.

WHAT'LL WE DO WITH THEM?

I SAY WE KEEP THEM HERE UNTIL WE CLEAR EVERYTHING OUT. THEN WE GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO RUN.

IF WE LET THEM GO, THEY MIGHT FOLLOW OUR TRAIL.

I KNOW IT'S NO LAUGHING MATTER TO KILL DEFENSELESS PEOPLE, BUT OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS TO MAKE SURE WE'RE SAFE.

WE'RE LIVING IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DEMAND EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES. THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE IT OUT OF THIS HELL WILL BE FEW. IF WE WANT TO BE AMONG THEM, WE NEED TO FORGET PITY.

NONE OF THEM LEAVE HERE ALIVE.

I COULD DO THIS MYSELF WITH NO REMORSE...

...BUT IN OUR LONG-TERM INTEREST, EACH OF YOU NEEDS TO GET USED TO LISTENING TO ME WITHOUT QUESTIONS, NO MATTER WHAT I ASK YOU TO DO.

ARGH!

PLEASE!

RRRH!

AFTER THIS...

I'M READY FOR ANYTHING.

THANKS AGAIN FOR THE MEAT, CHILDREN.

AND MAY GOD BE WITH YOU.

GOD...?

HE MUST BE ROTTING AWAY IN SOME ANCESTORIUM SOMEWHERE.

LOOK AT ALL THESE PEOPLE... WHAT'S GOING ON?

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE GREAT RELIGIONS HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE A JOINT ADDRESS FROM THE FIRST STORY OF THE EIFFEL TOWER...

GIVEN THE CROWD, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE PEOPLE HERE HAVE NO IDEA WHO TO PRAY TO ANYMORE...

THE UNDERGROUND MUNITIONS DEPOT IN THE CHAILLOT BARRACKS...